



August 13, 2019

Governor Michael J. Dunleavy
State Capitol
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

This morning you stated your commitment to protecting state services for seniors, children and public safety as you make final decisions on the operating budget.

It is important to recognize how critical the Medicaid Adult Dental Services benefit is for Alaska's seniors.

Medicare does not cover dental services. Seniors in Alaska rely on this benefit. Medicaid Adult Dental Services Dental care is critical to long-term care populations – especially our elderly and people with disabilities.

The elimination of the Adult Dental Medicaid program would deprive Alaska's seniors, individuals with disabilities and our working poor from dental services and increase costs in the long term.

Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits in Alaska open doors to Prevention and Cost Savings:

- We can reduce the cost of oral health and health costs in general by stopping problems before they start.
- Prevention programs, like Alaska's Adult Dental program, help people avoid serious problems like infections, that are expensive to treat. Treating cavities rather than waiting for the tooth to decay to the point it causes infections saves the state money by keeping dental patients out of ER's and allows people to retain salvageable teeth.

Oral health affects physical and mental health in Alaska:

- People with poor oral health face higher risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, complications in pregnancy and childbirth and other conditions.
- People with visible signs of oral disease are negatively judged and socially stigmatized, which affects mental health and well-being.

Oral health affects Alaska's social outcomes too:

- People with untreated dental problems, for example, often have difficulty finding jobs, which increases unemployment.

Oral health affects Alaska's communities:

- Poor oral health translates into lost earning potential, which decreases economic activity in Alaska.
- Cutting Adult Dental Medicaid benefits will lead to increased health care costs for all Alaskans.

Alaska's seniors and our most vulnerable residents are counting on you to stand firm in your commitment to support their well-being. Please maintain funding for Medicaid Adult Dental services in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Nancy Merriman
Executive Director

cc: Commissioner Adam Crum